

FROM THE CELL TO THE WORLD

order, with a view to avoiding all possibility of heresy or scandal, to appoint only friars of established fame and doctrine to such offices) had been made director of the convent of Dominican nuns of Santa Agnese at Montepulciano, where he had spent two years, and where, at the request of the nuns, he had written the life of their blessed patroness which still appears in the *Acta Sanctorum* for her feast. Thence he had been sent to San Domenico at Siena, as lector or professor of theology, and there (though he did not for some time see anything miraculous in her, nor put much credit in her revelations) he had at once espoused Catherine's cause, and insisted that she should on no account be hindered from communicating as often as she pleased.¹ To him she found she could open her heart as to no other man, and, with the cordial and humble assent of Fra Tommaso, he now took his place as her chief confessor and spiritual director,

"Considering," as he writes, "that Christ is far more powerful than Galen, and grace than nature," Raimondo led a devoted band of friars into the thickest fury of the pestilence, to lay down their lives for their people if such was God's will. Day and night, he was to be seen in the hospitals, or visiting the stricken in infected houses, bearing the Blessed Sacrament, hearing their last confessions, performing the rites for the dead. Both he and Fra Bartolommeo were among those who took the infection, and believed that Catherine's miraculous intervention had raised them up from the bed of death. But all the three Dominican sons of her companion, Cecca Gori, died.

Many others, priests and religious, had deserted the city, like those of the laity who could find a safer refuge. Fra Filippo tells a striking story of one of these latter, a man he knew, a great usurer and oppressor of the poor, who, at the first approach of

¹ *Legenda*, II. xii. 8 (§ 314). It was apparently on the feast of St. John the Baptist, when he acted as deacon at High Mass in San Domenico at Siena, that Catherine first saw Raimondo. Cf. Augusta Drane, I. p. 224, and Tantucci, p. 122. This must have been in the preceding year, if the author of the *MiracoR* is right in his statement that, in 1374, Catherine was at Florence till June 29.